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A comparative analysis: Buddhist Madhyamaka and Daoist Chongxuan (twofold mystery) in the early Tang (618-720)

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: BUDDHIST MADHYAMAKA AND

DAOIST CHONGXUAN (TWOFOLD MYSTERY)

IN THE EARLY TANG (618-720)

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

> One does not attach to "there is," nor to "there is not." Not only does he not attach to attachment, but neither to non-attachment.[1] (Cheng Xuanying)

Different interactions between Buddhism and Daoism have occurred since Buddhism entered China in the 1st century. Buddhism, as an Indian religion, first developed under the guise of Daoism because Buddhism, as a foreign teaching, more easily could reach Chinese people by drawing upon pre-existing religious and philosophical concepts. However, this did not continue for a long time because not only did Buddhists monks later think that it would distort the original teaching[2] but the large corpus of Mahayana texts also became available in Chinese, revealing the differences between Buddhism and Daoism.

Twofold Mystery (Chongxuan, 重玄) certainly represented another type of interaction between Buddhism and Daoism in the early Tang Dynasty (618-720) because Twofold Mystery Daoists drew largely from Buddhist Madhyamaka concepts. The above excerpt by Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl.632-650) perfectly expressed this type of interaction between two religions. If one does not know who Cheng Xuanying is but is familiar with the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness (Ch., kong 空; Snk.., śūnyatā) and tetralemma (Ch., siju 四句; Skt., cātuṣkoṭi), he/she would definitely end up designating him as a Buddhist who is well-versed in emptiness. Contrary to appearances, Cheng

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[1] Shiyi Yu, *Reading the "Chuang-tzu" in the T'ang Dynasty* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000), 67.

[2] For example, Dao'an 道安 (312/314-385) opposed the employment of non-Buddhist terminology in explaining Buddhist teachings because it might have "deviated from the principles of Buddhism. See "Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. 3rd ed. (Leiden: BRILL, 2007) 184-187.

Xuanying was a well-known Tang Daoist who even spoke against Buddhism in favor of Daoism.

Twofold Mystery is a Daoist philosophical movement developed in early Mid-Imperial China (589-720). It is known for employing Buddhist Madhyamaka concepts in commenting on the *Daode jing* (道德经), *Zhuangzi* (莊子) as well as at the officially sponsored court debates. Emptiness (kong 空), tetralemma (siju 四句) and the theory of two truths (erdi 二谛) are fundamental Madhyamaka concepts which are commonly used by Twofold Mystery Daoists not only to lead Daoists to attain oneness with the Dao but also to explain the profundity and mystery of the Dao.

Madhyamaka Buddhism, as a philosophical branch of Mahayana Buddhism, was developed in 2nd CE in India by Nāgārjuna, and was later moved into China in the 4th CE by Kumārajīva. Madhyamaka is defined as the middle path between two opposite extremes: existence (You, 有), which is the assertion of unchanging and permanent essences, and non-existence (Wu, 無), which is the rejection of any permanent essences even in the conventional world.

The interactions between Chinese religions has occupied an enormous amount of scholarly attention in many fields because there have been direct and indirect consequences resulting from the interactions among Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. These religious traditions have obviously influenced each other in many respects such as rituals, doctrines, textual materials, philosophy and so on. Accordingly, I will, in this paper, critically analyze the implications of the interactions between Buddhism and Daoism by examining Twofold Mystery. Since Twofold Mystery is heavily dependent on Madhyamaka Buddhist concepts, this study will, on the one hand,

examine the influence of Madhyamaka Buddhism on the development of Twofold Mystery. On the other hand, it will critically survey how Twofold Mystery remained faithful to the Daoist worldview.

While this study is not mainly concerned with the early interactions between Buddhism and Daoism, giving an overview of the Buddhist borrowing of Daoist terms will help clarify later Daoist adaptation of Buddhist terms. In the early years of the development of Buddhism in China, there was a close relationship between Buddhism and Daoism because Buddhism was regarded as a branch of Daoism. Furthermore, the story of Laozi's[3] 老子 journey to the West and conversion of the Buddha to Daoism enabled Buddhism to become a Chinese religion. Accordingly, Daoists thought that "Buddhism was a new method of obtaining immortality. They felt that the Buddhist nirvana was not different from the Taoist salvation, the arhat like the Taoist [zhenren], or pure man."[4] This early perception of Buddhism in China did not only make Buddhism easily accessible to the Chinese people, but it also prevented Buddhist teachings from being labeled as barbaric. Nevertheless, in this discussion of the early interactions between Buddhism and Daoism, it should be noted that Daoism by no means could be regarded as an organized religion with a body of texts, rituals, monastic rules and institutions. In other words, as Mair argued, "Daoism was in no position to serve as a model for the development of Buddhism in China."[5]

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[3] For the detailed historical survey of the profile of Laozi, see A.C. Graham, "The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan," in *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching,* ed.Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 23-40.

[4] Kenneth Kuan Sheng Ch'en, *Buddhism in China* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964) 50.

[5] Victor H. Mair, "What is Geyi, After All?" in *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China,* ed. Alan K. L. Chan, and Yuet-Keung Lo (New York: SUNY Press, 2010). 250.

The concept of *geyi* 格義 (pairing meanings) was a definitive characteristic of the early interactions between Buddhism and Daoism because it epitomized Buddhist borrowing of Daoist terms. This concept was developed as the result of attempts to make foreign Buddhist concepts understandable in China by matching them with pre-existent (mostly Daoist) religious and philosophical terms. The conventional way of understanding *geyi* as the pairing of Buddhist terms with the Daoist counterparts[6] has been recently challenged in the scholarship of Mair.[7] Mair first pointed out that the term *geyi* was mistranslated because the term *ge* 格 by no means signified matching or pairing.[8] After analyzing all the passages regarding *geyi* which existed only in Buddhist texts, Mair concluded that "geyi was a method for coping with the Indian proclivity for numerical lists of ideas and concepts."[9] In other words, "the comparanda of *geyi* were not Buddhist and Daoist terms for the purposes of translation, but numerical lists of Buddhist and non-Buddhist terms for purposes of explanation."[10] However, Mair's criticism of geyi did not ignore the fact that the early development of Buddhism employed Daoist

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[6]The following excerpts from the earlier studies on the early development of Chinese Buddhism explain the conventional way of understanding geyi. Ch'en described geyi as "the method of matching the meaning. This method was used especially by the translators of the Prajna Sutras for the purpose of making Buddhist thought more easily understood by Chinese." See Ch'en, *Buddhism in China,* 68-69. Chan also defined geyi as "the practice of 'matching concepts' of Buddhism and Taoism, in which a Buddhist concept is matched to one in Chinese thought." See Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963) 336. Finally, Wright stated that geyi "consisted of choosing a grouping of Buddhist ideas and matching them with a plausibly analogous grouping of indigenous ideas." See Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (California: Stanford University Press, 1959) 37.

[7] See Mair, "What is Geyi," 227-264.

[8] Mair, "What is Geyi," 2278-229.

[9] Mair, "What is Geyi," 240-241.

[10] Mair, "What is Geyi," 251.

religious and philosophical terms as well as other pre-Buddhist terminology to render alien Buddhist teachings more understandable to a Chinese audience.

The Twofold Mystery adoption of Buddhist concepts was beyond the simple copy-and-paste type of borrowing. Even though it is hard to determine all reasons why Twofold Mystery Daoists employed Buddhist concepts, two important factors in general can be suggested. First, the sophisticated philosophical structure of Buddhism might have appealed to Twofold Mystery Daoists as a way to explain the mystery and profundity of the Dao. To give an example, tetralemma, which is Buddhist Madhyamaka logical reasoning, was not only a great way to present the philosophy of one's teaching but it was a very efficient and effective way of leading practitioners to attain either enlightenment or oneness with the Dao. Second, since Buddhism was the most powerful and common religion in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Daoists sought to share the popularity of Buddhism among the people and imperial family, using Buddhist methods in the Daoist framework. For instance, in the imperial court debates, Daoists particularly employed Buddhist concepts of the theory of two truths and tetralemma, not only to show the integrity and unity of Daoist teachings but also to demonstrate their philosophical profundity. In short, the competition between Buddhism and Daoism for gaining imperial patronage motivated Daoists to employ Buddhist terms.

Accordingly, one of the main objectives of this study is to demonstrate how socio-political context determined the ways in which the interactions between Buddhism and Daoism took place. For example, in the imperial court debates, Daoists drew on Buddhist philosophical concepts to make Daoism competitive and to convince the emperor that Daoism was superior to Buddhism. In fact, both vying with Buddhism for imperial

patronage and employing Buddhist concepts were self-conflicting. Yet, Twofold Mystery Daoists always asserted the originality and authenticity of their ideas. For example, they claimed that Laozi was the first time to employ the tetralemma.

One of the problems in the scholarly discourse of the interaction between Buddhism and Daoism is that some Daoist scholars tend to emphasize the originality and authenticity of Daoism even though Daoism borrowed and adopted some concepts from Buddhism while some Buddhist scholars highlight the passive role Daoism took in the interactions between two religions. I will argue that these two approaches represent the two extreme cases of interaction between Buddhism and Daoism by using the example of Twofold Mystery. There is no doubt that Daoism adopted Buddhist concepts of the theory of two truths and tetralemma. However, Daoists employed these two concepts differently from the ways in which Buddhists used them as tools to explain the profundity and mystery of the Dao. To support my theses, after contextualizing Twofold Mystery, I will first explain the uses and functions of emptiness, two truths and tetralemma in Madhyamaka Buddhism and then compare and contrast them with the uses of functions of the same concepts Twofold Mystery Daoism.

CHAPTER I:

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

IN THE EARLY TANG DYNASTY (618-720)

This chapter will survey the important religious and philosophical developments in the early Tang Dynasty in which Twofold Mystery flourished. Until the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism enjoyed lavish imperial support which made it a strong and prevalent state religion in China. However, Daoism initially did not share the imperial support bestowed upon Buddhism because Daoism had not been organized and had not systemized its disparate teachings and practices as Buddhism had done. In addition, the fact that Daoists were not acquainted with various logical reasoning and philosophical methods that were used in India to defend Mahayana Buddhism against Abhidharma and non-Buddhist teachings lessened Daoists' effective and efficient ways of presenting their teachings.

In this section, I will contextualize when, where and under what conditions Twofold Mystery developed. Therefore, this section plays a particularly significant role in manifesting the impact of socio-political environment on the formation of Twofold Mystery. It also provides an overview of the major interactions between Buddhism and Daoism in the early Tang Dynasty. It ends with a discussion about the impact of interreligious court debates on the formation of Twofold Mystery Daoism. In conclusion, I suggest that socio-political conditions of the Early Tang Dynasty motivated Twofold Mystery Daoists to employ Buddhist concepts because both Buddhism and Daoism vied for imperial sponsorship.

The Tang Dynasty 唐朝 (618-907) marked an important turning point in the development of Daoism because, not only did Daoism begin to enjoy imperial support, it also became a part of intellectual life in society. This time period also was the beginning of the unification of Daoism from local and disparate teachings—The Way of Celestial Masters[11] (Tianshidao 天师道), Highest Clarity[12] (Shangqing 上清), and Numinous Treasure[13] (Lingbao 靈寶)—to an ecumenical teaching called Daoism (道教). Contrary to the previous four centuries when the above-mentioned three schools developed, there were neither new revelations nor establishments of new schools in the Tang Dynasty. Rather, Daoist "practices and beliefs were variously refined and expanded, and the social role of Daoists increased in importance," which culminated in the integration and synthesis of Daoist teachings and organizations.[14] Furthermore, imperial support of

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[11] The Way of Celestial Masters is regarded as the first organized religious Daoism (道教 daojiao). After Zhang Daoling 張道陵 (second c.) received revelations from Laozi in 142 CE establishing a new covenant between people and the gods of the Daoist pantheon, this branch of Daoism was formally founded. They accepted an active heaven and earth that responded to human actions through natural occurrences. Only through divine aid, which is represented with the Way of Celestial Masters, could people be saved from natural disasters or demonic attacks. For further information about The Way of Celestial Masters, see Barbara Hendrichke, "Early Daoist Movements" in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2000), 134-164. Robinet, *Taoism*, 53-78. Terry Kleeman, "Tianshi Dao," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 981-987.

[12] Highest Clarity, as a religious school, started with a series of revelations to the medium Yang Xi 楊羲 (330-86). "It consisted of a synthesis of the Way of Celestial Masters and the traditions of the immortality seekers…The cosmic insights of these two traditions further merged with the ecstatic traditions of south China and with various types of physiological practices…" Isabelle Robinet, "Shangqing—Highest Clarity" in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2000), 196. For more information about Highest Clarity, see Ibid., 196-224. Robinet, *Taoism*, 114-148.

[13] The salient feature of Numinous Treasure is that it is centered around a group of forty texts, revealed by Buddhist inspired deity Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Being (yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊) as well as associated with the immortal Ge Xuan 葛玄 (trad. 164-244) . However, this school officially started with Ge Chafu 葛巢甫 (fl. 402) who was a descendent of Ge Xuan. For detailed information about Numinous Treasure, see Robinet, *Taoism*, 149-183. Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "Lingbao," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 663-669. Yamada Toshiaki, "The Lingbao School," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2000), 225-256.

[14] Kohn and Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang," 339.

Daoism necessarily weakened the influence of Buddhism on the court system and Chinese intellectual life because Daoism became one of the most important players in intellectual life along with Buddhism and Confucianism thereafter.

Daoism's popularity and importance in the imperial family started with Li Yuan's 李淵 (566-635) reign as the founder of the Tang Dynasty. Li Yuan associated his ancestry with Laozi (his name was Li Er 李耳 in the *Shiji*[15] 史记) and regarded him as the ancestor of the imperial family by drawing upon the similarity of their surnames. Two important factors particularly motivated Li Yuan, who was later called Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-627), to support Daoism as Kohn suggested.[16] The first factor was the millenarian prophecies about the future sage-king who would be the descendant of the worldly manifestation of Laozi. The second factor was that Laozi was said to have miraculously appeared in 618, and prophesized that Li Yuan would take over the ruling of the dynasty.[17] As a result of these, Li Yuan honored Laozi as the sage-ancestor (shengzu, 聖祖) of the dynasty in 620.[18] This purportedly hereditary relation between Laozi and the Tang imperial family made Daoism so strong and popular that it could compete with Buddhism. This will be discussed in detail later when I will talk about the

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[15] *Shiji, Records of the Grand Historian*, was the first general history of its kind written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?-90? BCE) in China. It consisted of 103 fascicles covering the history of the legendary Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黄帝) (fl. 2600 BCE) to his contemporary time.

[16] Kohn and Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang," 339-341.

[17] Timothy H. Barrett, Taoism Under the T'ang (London: The Wellsweep Press, 1996) 20-21. Livia Kohn and Russell Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang (618-907)," *in Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2000), 341.

[18] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 341. Mark Edward Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty*, ed. Timothy Brook (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) 208.

imperial sponsored court debates in the Tang Dynasty. This imperial support increasingly continued under the emperors: Taizong 太宗 (r. 627-650), Gaozong 高宗 (r.650-684), and Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713-756).

As for the development of Daoism under Taizong, he imperially exalted Daoism over Buddhism by issuing an edict in 637.[19] He established state-sponsored Daoist abbeys at prestigious mountains such as Louguan, Maoshan, and Baozhou.[20] Gaozong's reign marked a very important historical moment not only for the institutionalization of Daoism but also for its spread across China. For example, Gaozong established imperial sponsored abbeys over the 300 prefectures.[21] He officially confirmed the higher sacral status of the *Daode jing* and also made it a compulsory text for the official exams in 678.[22] His sponsorship of the compilation of the Daoist Canon in 675 played a particularly important role in the unification and institutionalization of Daoism. In addition, the leading Daoist masters and thaumaturges such as Pan Shizheng[23] 潘師正 (585-682) and Ye Fashan[24] 葉法善 (631-720) were invited to advise the rulers and

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[19] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 342. Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire,* 208.

[20] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 342.

[21] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 342.

[22] Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire,* 208. Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 343. Robinet, *Taoism,* 185.

[23] Pan Shizheng was one of the most important Daoist masters in Tang Dynasty. He was the eleventh Highest Clarity (Shangqing, 上清) patriarch. Emperor Gaozong visited him several times and exalted him by describing him as an "honored recluse." For more information about Pan, see Russell Kirkland, "Pan Shizheng," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 782-783.

[24] Ye Fashan was particularly renowned for thaumaturgic practices. His success and popularity in thaumaturgy made him such a significant figure in Tang Dynasty that he was honored by the five Tang rulers from Gaozong to Xuanzong. For more information about Ye Fashan, see Russell Kirkland, "Ye Fashan," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1154-1155.

perform various Daoist rituals for the prosperity of the government.[25] The leading figures of Twofold Mystery, Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl.632-650) and Li Rong 李榮 (fl. 685-683) were also active in the court debates under the reign of Gaozong. I will talk in detail about these two Twofold Mystery figures in the third chapter when I study the development of Twofold Mystery.

By employing Buddhism in the legitimization of her reign in 691, the Empress Wu Zetian 武则天 (r. 684-705) gave Buddhism precedence over Daoism. After the Empress Wu's reign, Daoism again became the recipient of lavish support under Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713-756)[26]. Daoism became stronger in both the promotion of its texts and the number of its followers in this period. This is best illustrated by the facts that the *Daode jing* was engraved on a stone for the first time in 721 and all Daoists were placed under the Court of Imperial Clan in 743[27]. Furthermore, Xuanzong played a significant role in the study of Daoist texts by establishing Daoist institutions such as College of Daoist Studies (Chongxuanxue, 崇玄學) and Jixian Academy (Jixianyuan, 集賢院). Under imperial control, a College of Daoist Studies was established in each prefecture in 741.[28] At the same time, Jixian Academy hosted prominent scholars and practitioners of Daosim to give lectures and research there, such as Sima Chengzhen[29] 司馬承禎 (647-

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[25] Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire,* 209.

[26] Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, 43-46.

[27] Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire,* 209.

[28] Kohn and Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang," 346.

[29] Sima Chengzhen was a prominent Daoist master in the Tang Dynasty. He was the twelfth patriarch of Highest Clarity (Shangqing, 上清). In addition, he had also very close relationships with the Tang rulers including, Empress Wu, Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684-90, 710-12) and Xuanzong. Therefore, "Sima brought the Shangqing heritage into the state cult." For more information about Sima Chengzhen, see Russell Kirkland,

735); and Chen Xilie 陳希烈 (d. 757).[30] On the other hand, their lavish support for Daoism allowed the Tang rulers to utilize the religion in support of their rulership. For example, Sima Chengzhen gave "lay ordination" and "secret oral instructions" to the Emperor Xuanzong that made him a religiously legitimate ruler.[31] Furthermore, Xuanzong placed his own statute side by side with the statue of Laozi in state-sponsored temples, -which not only showed the close relationship between the imperial family and Daoism but also demonstrated the influence of the state on the formation of Daoism.[32]

In addition, imperially-sponsored court debates, in which the representatives of the three teachings (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism) found an opportunity to explain their teachings as well as to defend themselves from accusations made against them, demonstrated the significant influence of the state on religion. These debates were a distinguishing feature of the religio-political environment in the Six Dynasties (220-589) and Tang Dynasty (618-907).[33] Emperors essentially hosted the debates where each side presented arguments and answered each other's questions. However, emperors had the final ability to determine the winners of the debates that would receive the imperial sponsorship for their teachings. Furthermore, the winners might end up in the capital, advising emperors, and directing imperial rituals. Therefore, it was not only rather prestigious for monastics to engage in these debates but it also enabled them to play an

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"Sima Chengzhen," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 911-14.

[30] Kohn and Kirkland, *"*Daoism in the Tang*,"* 346-348.

[31] Kohn and Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang," 346-347.

[32] Kohn and Kirkland, "Daoism in the Tang," 345.

[33] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 15.

active role in the formation of their religions.[34] On the emperors' side, these debates were important because they could decide the strongest teaching through which they would legitimize their rule.[35] On the other hand, the debates were an important way of entertaining emperors and people.[36]

One of the most important documents that reported the court debates held between 658 and 663 is *Ji gujing Fo Dao Lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 (*Critical Evolution of Buddhism and Daoism Past and Present*, T[37] 2104).[38] This text was compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) who was a prominent Buddhist master in the Vinaya School (Jielü zong, 戒律宗). Daoxuan presented this document to the throne in 664[39] at a time when Daoism was still officially supported by the empire and Laozi was regarded as the ancestor of the imperial family. This document represented the competition between Daoism and Buddhism which always ended in the favor of the latter.[40] Assandri has questioned the reliability of this compilation because it was not possible to conduct a cross-reference check,[41] yet he did not elaborate on his reasons to challenge the reliability of the text.

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[34] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 16.

[35] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 16.

[36] Assandri, Inter-religious Debate, 18.

[37] T refers to the Taishō shinshū daizōkyō edition of the Buddhist Canon, Tokyo, 1924-1032.

[38] Assandri, Inter-religious Debate, 16-17.

[39] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 17.

[40] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 17.

[41] Assandri, "Inter-religious Debate," 17.

These court debates certainly represented a different type of intellectual exchange between Buddhism and Daoism. They played a significant role in the development of Twofold Mystery because not only were the representatives of Twofold Mystery highly involved with the court debates, but these debates also paved the way for the mutual borrowing of each other's religious and philosophical concepts. In other words, these debates were the places at which Daoists heavily employed Buddhist terms and argumentative methods not only to present their teaching to be as sophisticated and integrated as Buddhism, but also to gain imperial support by winning the debate. For example, Daoists employed the theory of two truths (erdi, 二諦), which were brought by Mādhyamika Buddhism into China, in discussions about the inadequacy of language for the explanation of the absolute.[42]

In conclusion, the early Tang rulers incontrovertibly supported Daoism over Buddhism which led Daoism to be established as an institutionalized religion. Having an opponent like Buddhism was an important incentive for Daoism to be institutionalized. The collection of the Daoist canon, the promotion of Laozi as a major deity, and the heavy employment of Daoist texts in religious and governmental affairs definitely were important steps for the institutionalization of Daoism. However, imperial support for Daoism did not mean that Buddhism was suppressed under the Tang Dynasty. Buddhism retained its status and power given by the Sui Dynasty under the Tang Dynasty. For example, Gaozong ordered that there be a temple of both religions in each prefecture of the government in addition to three temples of each on Mount Tai (Taishan 台山).[43] One

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[42] Assandri, Inter-religious Debate, 28.

[43] Barrett, *Taoism Under the T'ang*, 31.

disadvantageous situation was that Buddhism had to share its power and privilege with Daoism. Given the fact that Chinese culture had not produced a very well-constructed religion like Buddhism, Buddhism easily spread throughout China and gained imperial support until the promotion of consolidated and unified Daoism by the Tang Dynasty. Nevertheless, Buddhism was by far the most influential teaching in the Tang Dynasty even though Daoism received lavish support from most Tang rulers. There were even more Buddhist temples in Changan, the Tang capital, than Daoist temples, respectively, 91 and 14, in 722 under the reign of Xuanzong, the apogee of Daoism.[44]

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[44] Kohn and Kirkland, *"*Daoism in the Tang*,"* 345. Robinet, *Taoism,* 187.

CHAPTER II:

BUDDHIST MADHYAMAKA SCHOOL

After contextualizing the time period in which the development of Twofold Mystery took place, I will, in this chapter, explain the basic characteristics of the Madhyamaka School of Buddhism, namely: emptiness, the theory of two truths, and tetralemma. As mentioned in the introduction, these fundamental Mahayana Buddhist concepts have been heavily utilized by Twofold Mystery Daoists in the commentaries of the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi* as well as inter-religious court debates. Thus, this section plays a particularly important role in this study because the Twofold Mystery's employment of the theory of two truths and tetralemma cannot be effectively understood, nor would the different conceptualizations of emptiness be realized, without a thorough understanding of basic concepts of Madhyamaka Buddhism. In other words, since one of the main objectives of this study is to examine how Buddhism and Daoism differ from each other in their employment of the same concepts, this chapter plays a particularly significant role in distinguishing the Madhyamaka understanding of emptiness, the theory of two truths, and tetralemma from Twofold Mystery conceptualizations of the same terms.

Madhyamaka Buddhism, as a philosophical branch of Mahayana Buddhism, developed in the 2nd CE in India. It certainly underwent some degree of transformation before settling in China in the 4th CE. This transformation was the natural consequence of the transmission of a religion from one area to another area, from one time period to another time period, and from one language to another language. Since Twofold Mystery

developed around the 6th to 7th CE in China, the Chinese understanding of Madhyamaka Buddhism at the same period plays a significant role for truly understanding Twofold Mystery. Therefore, I will look essentially at the texts of Chinese Mādhyamikans along with the writings of Nāgārjuna (Longshu, 龍樹) (2nd-3rd CE), who is regarded as the founder of Madhyamaka Buddhism.

Madhyamaka, along with Yogācāra, is one of the two main Mahayana philosophical schools. It started with the writings of Nāgārjuna in the 2nd CE in India and became known in China through Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344-413 CE), who translated both Nāgārjuna's works and other influential Buddhist sutras in Chinese Buddhism. There are various legendary accounts of Nāgārjuna mentioned in Buddhist texts such as *Nāgārjuna Boddhisattva*[45] (*Longshu pusa*, 龍樹菩薩, T2047). However, there is scarcity of reliable information about Nāgārjuna's life, as he lived during the first three centuries CE in the southern Indian region.[46] Of the many works attributed to him, *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā* (MMK) (*Fundamentals of the Middle Way*) is the single most important text and is also the masterpiece of the Madhyamaka tradition. This text had a significant impact on the formation of Chinese Buddhism. It was cited by various schools of Chinese Buddhism and Nāgārjuna was also regarded as the founder of their schools. What made Nāgārjuna particularly prominent was his extraordinary use of the rules of debates and special forms of argument to invalidate the teachings of non-Buddhist and

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[45] This legendary account of Nāgārjuna was translated from Sanskrit to Chinese by Kumārajīva from 401 to 409 CE. For English translation of the text, see Kumārajīva, "*Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva*," trans. Rongxi Li, in Lives of Great Monks and Nuns (Berkley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2002), 17-31.

[46] Westerhoff, *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka,* 6-7.

Abhidarma schools.[47] Even though Nāgārjuna lived in India, his teachings significantly shaped Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism. His works, along with the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, were the earliest sources that established the ontological and phenomenological emptiness of being.

The translations of Nāgārjuna's works into Chinese by Kumārajīva in the 5th CE marked the introduction of Madhyamaka to China. Kumārajīva was born in Kucha in Central Asia and was first influenced by the Sarvāstivāda School of Buddhism but later converted to Mahayana Buddhism.[48] Kumārajīva's renown for his great learning and occult powers led him to be sought by the ruler of China in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (東晉 317-420). Finally, he settled in Chang'an, the capital of Eastern Jin, where he translated as many as 72 Buddhist texts[49] into Chinese under imperial patronage.[50] Three of the texts that he translated are particularly important for this study because they engendered the basis of Madhyamaka in China. These are *Madhyamaka-śāstra* (*Zhong lun* 中論),[51] the *Dvādaśanikāya-śāstra* (*Shiermen lun* 十二門論) by Nāgārjuna, and the *Śata-śāstra*

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[47] Ming-Wood Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 26.

[48] Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 36. For more information about Kumārajīva, see Richard H. Robinson, *Early Madhyamika in India and China* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967) 71-95.

[49] Among the most important of these are *the Diamond Sūtra* (*Jinggang jing* 金剛經), *Amitâbha-sūtra* (*Amituojing* 阿彌陀經), *Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua jing* 法華經), and *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* (*Weimi jing* 維摩經).

[50] Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 36

[51] This is the collection that included Nāgārjuna 's *Madhyamaka-kārikā,* Pingala's notes and Kumārajīva's comments on the main text.

(*Bai lun* 百論) by his disciple Āryadeva 提婆 (3rd CE).[52] Referring to the number of the texts, Chinese Madhyamaka is often called the Sanlun School (三論宗).

In the years that followed these translations, Kumārajīva's students and later Chinese Buddhists made considerable contributions to the development of Buddhism in China. Some of Kumārajīva's well-known students are Daorong 道融 (4th?-5th CE), Sengrui 僧睿 (378-444? CE), and Sengzhao 僧肇 (384-414? CE). Not only did they write commentaries on the existing Madhyamaka literature but they also produced their own works which paved the way for new interpretations of Buddhism in China. Therefore, while the following three subsections explain the three fundamental Madhyamaka concepts in China, I will primarily look at the Chinese Madhyamaka literature in addition to Nāgārjuna's writings because Twofold Mystery developed vis-à-vis Chinese Madhyamaka.

Emptiness

Emptiness (Ch., kong, 空; Snk.., śūnyatā) is a distinctive Mahayana doctrine which rejects any substantial, permanent, and unchanging being and instead advocates the dependent origination of all ontological and phenomenological beings. In other words, emptiness is the abandonment of self-nature (Ch., zixing, 自性; Snk., svabhāva). This is the fundamental doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism through which one cuts off his or her attachments, realizes that no being exists on its own and finally attains enlightenment. Emptiness doctrine teaches that various causes and conditions determine the nature of an

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[52]Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, s.v. "三論," accessed January 28, 2013, http://www.buddhism-dict.net.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id%28%27b4e09-8ad6%27%29

object because the certain characteristics and attributes that made the object a particular being will disappear when those causes and conditions change.

Emptiness was brought into China with the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and Nāgārjuna's writings. The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* are a large body of texts which commonly teaches emptiness. Some of the famous *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* are the *Heart Sūtra* (*Bore xinjing* 般若心經), the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Jingang jing* 金剛經), and the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Bore boluomi duo jing* 般若波羅蜜多經). Even though the idea of emptiness appeared in Abhidarma texts, the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras were the earliest texts that took emptiness as a principal doctrine of Buddhism. In other words, all doctrinal and practical concepts of Buddhism centered on emptiness in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. The following excerpt from the *Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-five Thousand Lines* (*Guangzan bore boluomi jing* 光讚般若波羅蜜經) displays how emptiness was conceptualized in one of the earliest texts on emptiness.

> What is emptiness of all dharmas? All dharmas means the five skandhas, the twelve sense fields, the six kinds of consciousness, the six kinds of contact, the six kinds of feeling conditioned by contact. Conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, these are called "all-dharmas." Therein all dharmas are empty of all-dharmas, on account of their being neither unmoved nor destroyed. For such is their essential nature.[53]

The above excerpt demonstrates two main characteristics of emptiness. Firstly, the basic doctrines and fundamental practices of Buddhism, such as five skandhas, and six kinds of consciousness, are also empty in nature. Secondly, all ontological and phenomenological beings are empty because they are conditioned by contact not because they are "unmoved nor destroyed".

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[53] Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 24.

One of the salient features of emptiness in Nāgārjuna's MMK is the negation of Self Nature (Ch., xing, 性 Skt., svabhva and prakriti).[54] Xing, svabhava, and prakriti all connote unchangeability.[55] Nāgārjuna also explained the independence of essence and the lack of any substantial permanent being with the fact that all beings exist in relation to conditions and causations. In other words, they do not have their own intrinsic and independent reality because they are contingent upon conditions and causations.

Nāgārjuna succinctly explains the notion of emptiness in the following quote from his work *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (*Da zhidu lun,* 大智度論):

> The various entities originate from the combination of causes. As these entities [originating] from combination do not have determinate nature, they are empty. Why? Entities originating from causes are devoid of Self Nature. Because they are devoid of Self Nature, they are ultimate Emptiness. This ultimate Emptiness is originally empty, not being made by the Buddha or anyone else.[56]

Nāgārjuna describes emptiness with two important points: all entities arise from causes and they therefore lack any inherent nature. However, according to Nāgārjuna, this this does not adequately represent emptiness because emptiness itself was empty. Even though Nāgārjuna's assertion of the emptiness of emptiness might appear as contradictory，the denial of the emptiness of emptiness is in fact quite contradictory to the basis of emptiness. Since emptiness requires the denial of the self-existent and inherent natures of things, the assertion of independent emptiness opposes the emptiness doctrine itself. In other words, one would cling to emptiness and could not cut of his or her attachments, which would hinder one from the realization of enlightenment.

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[54] Rujun Wu and Yu-Kwan Ng, *T'ian-Tai Buddhism and Early Madhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 13-14.

[55] Wu and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai*, 14.

[56] Wu and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai,* 17.

Since emptiness rejects the existence of permanent and unchanging beings, it is confused with nihilist conceptualization of non-existence. However, Nāgārjuna's equation of emptiness with dependent co-arising (pratītyasamutpāda) clearly distinguishes the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness from the nihilist view of non-existence. In other words, Madhyamaka does not base its fundamental doctrine of emptiness on the denial of existence but on the dependent co-arising of beings. The following two verses from MMK XXIV epitomize how emptiness is related to dependent origination:

18 Whatever is dependently co-arisen
    That is explained to be emptiness.
    That, being a dependent designation,
    Is itself the middle way.

19 Something that is not dependently arisen,
    Such a thing does not exist
    Therefore a nonempty thing
    Does not exist.[57]

Nāgārjuna stated that beings which arise dependently are empty beings and this level of understanding is called the middle way because it does not fall into the trap of the two extremities of existence, eternalism and nihilism. Emptiness entails abstaining from the two extremes of being and non-being.[58] The assertion of non-being is as fallacious as the assertion of being because it presupposes the unchangeable nature of non-being.

Having explained Emptiness from Nāgārjuna's writings, I will now look at three prominent Chinese Buddhists' explanation of emptiness, namely Sengrui, 僧睿 (378-444? CE), Sengzhao 僧肇 (384-414? CE), and Jizang 吉藏 (549-623). By doing this, I will

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[57] Nāgārjuna. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika,* trans. Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995) 69.

[58] Gadjin Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Madhyamika Philosophy*, trans. John P. Keenan, First ed., (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989) 12.

demonstrate understandings of emptiness from the perspectives of different Madhyamaka masters in different periods, which are nonetheless limited to the time period of the development of Twofold Mystery (5ᵗʰ – 7ᵗʰ CE). In other words, knowing the explanation of emptiness by Madhyamaka masters around the flourishing of Twofold Mystery will help reveal to what degree Daoist borrowing of Buddhist concepts took place.

> The quote below is from a preface of *the Middle Treatise* by Sengrui:

> Final Bodhi requires the realization that all the dharmas are non-arising and utterly empty, but the Hinayanist cling to the view that though persons are empty, dharmas are not. Thus he fails to transcend the dichotomy of existent and inexistent, rests in the dualism of religious versus worldly.[59]

Sengrui, like Nāgārjuna, claimed that all existent beings, including dharmas, which are defined by the Abhidarma literature as ultimate and unchanging beings like atoms, are empty because they all arise dependently. Sengrui also became critical of Hinayanists because they fell into the trap of dualism caused by their misunderstanding of emptiness. In Madyamaka, emptiness stands against dualism because beings' dependent origins prevent them from having inherent and permanent qualities. This succinct explanation of emptiness demonstrated how an early Chinese Buddhist conceptualized the main doctrine of Madhyamaka.

Sengzhao, who was one of Kumārajīva' prominent students and a prolific writer on Madyamaka, made important contributions to the sinification of Buddhism. Even though Sengzhao used Neo-Daoist Mystery Learning (xuanxue 玄学)[60] terminology in

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[59] Robinson, *Early Madhyamika*, 117.

[60] Mystery Learning is one of the earliest philosophical schools in China, developed after the Han Dynasty (206BCE-220CE). Wang Bi 王弼 (226-49) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (252?-312) were the main representatives if this philosophical understanding.The *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi* and *Yijing* were the main texts that Mystery Learning masters commented and annotated.

his writings, he clearly emphasized the distinctness of Buddhism.[61] At the time when Sengzhao got interested in Mahayana scriptures and created his own works on Madhyamaka, Xuanxue was popular in China. Sengzhao became interested in the Daoist works of the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* at an early age. Therefore, the stylistic resemblances of Madhyamaka and Mystery Learning in his writings mainly had to do with his background.

The following quote successfully demonstrates how Sengzhao conceptualized emptiness:

> Hence, there are indeed reasons why myriad dharmas are inexistent and cannot be taken as existent; there are reasons why [myriad dharmas] are not inexistent and cannot be taken as inexistent. Why? If we would say that they exist, their existent is not real; if we would say that they don't exist, their phenomenal forms have taken shape. Having forms and shapes, they are not inexistent. Being not real, they are not truly existent. Hence the meaning of bu zhen kong [not really empty, 不眞空] is made manifest.[62]

Sengzhao points out the ambiguous reality of the nature of beings that cannot be considered existent or inexistent. In other words, Sengzhao rejects the conceptualization of both the existences and inexistences of beings. This notion of emptiness also distinguishes Sengzhao's Madhyamaka from Mystery Learning because original non-being (benwu 本無) is the source of all beings in Mystery Learning. As a result, Sengzhao's understanding of emptiness explicitly differs from what is held about emptiness by Mystery Learning.

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[61] Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 38-39.

[62] This quote is from the essay *The Emptiness of the Non-Absolute* (*buzhenkong*, 不眞空) by Segzhao. I used the English translation of Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 56. For the original text, see T1858_.45.0152a28 –b03. For the English translation of the whole text, see Robinson, *Early Madhyamika*, 222-227.

The last excerpt is from Jizang, who mastered Madhyamaka scriptures and wrote commentaries on them[63]. He is regarded as the founder of the Sanlun School (sanluan zong 三論宗), which is the renaming of Madhyamaka in China, because of his significant contribution to the School. Jizang was not literally the founder of it because the main texts of the School were translated by Kumārajīva and explained by the commentaries of Kumārajīva's students. Nevertheless, Jizang particularly stood out with his original works and commentaries on the Sanlun School literature. Thus, Liu has described the first term of the development of Madhyamaka by Kumārajīva and his disciples as the "the advent of Chinese Madhyamaka" and the later term of the development of Madhyamaka as the "the revival of Chinese Madhyamaka."[64]

The following quote from the commentary of the MMK by Jizang points out the wrong understandings of emptiness and then explains the correct way of emptiness:

> The Abhidharma thinkers regard the four holy truths as true. The *Satyasiddhi* regards merely the truth of cessation of suffering, i.e., the principle of emptiness and equality, as true. The southern Mahāyāna tradition regards the principle that refutes truths as true, and the northern [Mahāyāna tradition] regards *thatness* [suchness] and *prajñā*as as true… Examining these all thogether, if there is a single [true] principle, it is an eternal view, which is false. If there is no principle at all, it is an evil view, which is also false. Being both existent and non-existent consists of the eternal and nihilistic views altogether. Being neither existent nor nonexistent is a foolish view. One replete with these four phrases has all [wrong] views. One without these four phrases has a severe nihilistic view. Now that [one] does not know how to name what a mind has nothing to rely upon and is free from conceptual construction, [he] foists "thatness" [suchness] upon it, one attains sainthood of the three vehicles… Being deluded in regard to thatness [suchness], one falls into the six realms of disturbed life and death. [65]

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[63] Some of his important works are the *Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義, *Zhongguan lun shu* 中觀論疏, *Erdi zhang* 二諦章, *Bailun shu* 百論疏, *Shi er men lun shu* 十二門論疏, and the *Dasheng xuanlun* 大乘玄論.

[64] Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*.

[65] This quote is from the *Commentary on the Mādhyamika-śāstra* (*Zhongguanlun shu* 中觀論疏) written by Jizang. I used the English translation of Wen-ling Jane, "*Practice and Theory of Emptiness: A Study of*

Jizang points out that that there are various conceptualizations of beings that mislead people about emptiness. He particularly emphasizes that dualistic views of beings lead people to have certain positions that trap them in either existentialism or nihilism. In other words, asserting the reality of suchness and prajñāas was as erroneous as refuting the reality of them. That is why he said that "[t]hatness [suchness] is the basis of enlightenment and delusion." One should not cling to suchness, because it is a kind of attachment. When Nāgārjuna talked about the people who would be harmed by emptiness[66], he probably pointed out emptiness of this kind to which people attached.[67] This last point also allowes us to see the continuity of emptiness from Nāgārjuna to Jizang.

The voidness of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism including four holy truths and emptiness might seem contradictory to doctrinal and practical aspects of Buddhism but in fact is not. The theory of two truths clarifies this dilemma by systematizing conventional and ultimate truths, which will be explained in the following section.

Jizang's Commentary on the 'Refutation of Emptiness' of the Bailun" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2009), 224. For the original text, see T1824_.42.0123c28- 0124a09.

[66] Nāgārjuna's description of being harmed by emptiness goes as follows:
    We say that this understanding of yours
    Of Emptiness and the purpose of emptiness
    And of the significance of emptiness is incorrect
    As a consequence you are harmed by it (MMK XXIV)
For the whole text, see Nāgārjuna, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way,* 68.

[67] Nāgārjuna, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way,* 68.

The Theory of Two Truths

The theory of two truths (Ch., erdi 二諦; Skt., satya-dvaya) is a fundamental tenet of Madhyamaka Buddhism, which consists of conventional truth (Ch., shisu di 世俗諦; Snk., saṁvṛti-satya) and ultimate truth (Ch., shengyi di 勝義諦; Snk., paramārtha-satya). Conventional truth refers to ordinary or unenlightened people's understanding of dharmas as real existences whereas ultimate truth refers to enlightened people's understanding of dharmas as empty in essence and non-originating. However, these explanations of conventional and ultimate truths cannot be applied to all Buddhist schools. There are particularly different understandings of two truths in Indian Buddhism that I will not explain here.[68] Instead, I will focus on Chinese understanding of twofold truth for the purpose of this study.

One of the earliest texts that introduced two truths as a basis of the Buddha's teaching method in China was Nāgārjuna's MMK. Nāgārjuna explained twofold truth as follows:

8   The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma
             Is based on two truths:
             A truth of worldly convention
             And an ultimate truth.

9   Those who do not understand
             The distinction between these truths
             Do not understand
             The Buddha's profound truth.

10   Without foundation in the conventional truth,
             The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.

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[68] For detailed information on the different conceptualizations of twofold truth in Indian Buddhism, see Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "The Theory of Two Truths in India," accessed February 15, 2013, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/

> Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
> Liberation is not achieved.[69]

Nāgārjuna points out the importance of two truths in understanding "the Buddha's profound truth." To Nāgārjuna, this theory of twofold truth was not only important for knowing "[t]he Buddha's profound truth" but it was also vital to attaining enlightenment. Furthermore, the soteriological purposes of twofold truth cannot be overlooked because it prevents people from misunderstanding the significant roles of the practical and doctrinal aspects of Buddhism, such as the four noble truths, meditation, and the three jewels. These do not mean anything for an enlightened one but they are necessary steps for ordinary people to realize ultimate truth. As for the functions of two truths, we cannot talk about the superiority of one over the other because the path, knowledge, and cultivation correspond to worldly truth whereas the cessation of them is linked to ultimate truth. In other words, Nāgārjuna highlighted the importance of worldly truth as a way leading one to attain ultimate truth. Therefore, he asserted that those who did not understand the distinction between worldly truth and ultimate truth would not understand the profound meaning of the Buddha's teaching.

In addition, Nāgārjuna linked the theory of two truths to emptiness to elucidate the paradoxical side of emptiness, which is the assertion of the conventional reality of phenomena despite their lack of any inherent existence. In other words, the theory of two truths might be misleading because it creates a dualistic structure of two distinctive realities, which conflicts with emptiness. Yet, the theory of two truths does not assert that there is a distinction between the worldly truth and ultimate truth on an ontological level.

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[69] Nāgārjuna. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagrjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika,* trans. Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995) 68.

In fact, ultimate and conventional truths are the same but people conceive of them differently. The following quote from the *Middle Treatise* (zhonglun 中論) clarifies the relationship between the conventional and ultimate truths.

> With respect to the "mundane truth," all dharmas are in nature empty. Yet [the opinion of] the world is fallacious, and hence there arise false dharmas which are [regarded as] real "from the standpoint of the world" (yu shi jian 於世間). The sages and the holy men truly know the fallacious nature [of the opinions of the world], and hence they know that all dharmas are empty and non-originating. [This knowledge] is the "supreme truth" [seen] "from the standpoint of holy men" (yu sheng ren 於聖人) and is called "real." The Buddhas have recourse to these two truths on preaching the Dharma for sentient beings. If a person cannot correctly distinguish between the two truths, then he will not know the real meaning of the very profound Buddha Dharma. [70]

This passage primarily bases the difference between ultimate and conventional truths on people's perceptions. With regards to both conventional and ultimate truths, all beings are empty. However, people's different capacities of understanding the reality lead to the conceptualization of two truths. As a result, we cannot talk about any ontological differences between two truths.

After having explained the theory of two truths from the writings of its founder Nāgārjuna, I will now look at the conceptualization of two truths in China through a closer examination of Jizang and Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), both of whom were the most prominent proponents of two truths in China with their abundant employment of the theory in their writings.[71] Jizang and Zhiyi, in the same manner, were critical of any kind of dualistic perception of two truths because it would demolish the Buddhist teaching of

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[70]This excerpt is from Chinese translation of Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamaka-kārikā* which is also appended with notes by Piṅgala. For the English translation of the quote, see Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*. For the original text, see T1564_.30.0032c20-25.

[71] *Profound Meanings of Sanlun* (*sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義) (T. 45, no. 1852) and *Meanings of Two Truths* (*erdi yi* 二諦義) (T45, no. 1854) are two important texts in which Jizang employed and systemized two truths.

emptiness. Nevertheless, they followed different methods to explain their understanding of two truths. For example, Jizang employed the four levels of two truths while Zhiyi used threefold truth to explicate the theory of two truths.[72]

The following excerpt from the *Profound Meanings of Sanlun* demonstrates how Jizang understood two truths:

> [Nāgārjuna] explains that the Tathāgatas always have recourse to the two truths on preaching the Dharma: First the mundane truth, second the supreme truth. Hence, the two truths are just means of instruction and are not concerned with objects and principles.[73]

To Jizang, two truths is merely a vehicle though quite an important one which all buddhas used to balance between the lack of permanent essences and the conventional truth of beings. Especially, two truths systematized the notion of avoiding the two extremes of existences and inexistences as a middle school. Thus, the theory of two truths, to Jizang, is very important vehicle in the establishment of emptiness.

At the same time, Jizang cautioned against the confusion of two truths, which creates a dualistic understanding of two truths as conventional and ultimate. We can clearly see his concern with this confusion from the following quote of the *Meanings of Two Truths*.

> Further, [if we take] the two truths as two principles, that would constitute "acquisition."… Sentient beings already have the error of [harboring] dualistic views. If the Buddhas further teach that the true principle is dual then not only is their old error not got rid of, but new delusions would also be added. For this

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[72] For further discussion on the ways in which Jizang and Zhiyi differ from and agree on their conceptualizations of the theory of two truths, see Paul L Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-T'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1989), 97-157.

[73] For the original text, see T1852_45.0011a01-15a01. I used the English translation of Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 140.

reason, the Buddhas, [with a view to] adapting to [the understanding of] sentient beings, say that there are two truths. Actually, the true principle is not dual.[74]

Jizang clarifies that two truths do not refer to disparate principles or realities. Otherwise, it would become contradictory to the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. Since the essence of the Buddha's teachings is the rejection of dualistic thinking, the ontological understanding of two truths poses a serious threat to emptiness. In addition, Jizang points out the soteriological function of two truths because it helps people understand the Buddha's message, culminating in the realization of enlightenment.

Jizang developed the four forms of two truths to prevent possible misunderstandings of two truths. We can argue that the main motivation behind the conceptualization of four forms of two truths was to instruct people with different levels of capacity to understand the Buddha's message. The following quote from the *Profound Meanings of Sanlun* explains each level of the four forms:

> [1.] They (the misinterpreters of the initial statement) merely take "existence" as the mundane truth and "emptiness" as the supreme truth.
> [2.] Now, we explain that "existence" and "emptiness" are mundane truths and only "neither emptiness nor existence" is the supreme truth
> [3.] "Emptiness" and "existence" are a [form] of duality; "neither emptiness nor existence" is a [form of] non-duality. "Duality" and "non-duality" are both mundane truths; "neither duality nor non-duality" is called the supreme truth.
> [4.] These three forms of two truths are all means of instruction. We speak about these three categories [of two truths] in order to make people realize [the] non-[difference of the] three [categories of two truths]. Only non-dependence and non-acquisition are called the [true] principles.
> Question: [Do you mean that] the first three [forms of two truths] are all mundane truths and the non-[difference of the] three [forms of two truths] is the supreme truth?
> Reply: It is so.[75]

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[74] For the original text, see T1854_45.0108c17-23. I used the English translation of Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 141.

[75] For the original text, see T1852_.45.0015c5-11. I used the English translation of Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, 150-1.

Jizang primarily drew upon two truths as a method of instruction that leads people to attain enlightenment. People with keen understanding instantly perceive the Buddha's message of non-attachment in the first level, so they do not then need to go the next level. However, most people will need other steps to realize the Buddha's original message. When people attach to emptiness against existence, they will cling to emptiness and perceive it as if it was the ultimate truth. Therefore, they have to go to the next level which asserts the non-duality of existence and emptiness. Finally, the fourth form establishes the notion of the non-difference of the previous four forms of truths, so people should not attach to any form of two truths.

Zhiyi, the de facto founder of Tiantai School 天台宗, developed threefold truths—emptiness, conventional existence, and the Middle—by cautioning against the problem of falling into the trap of dualism. He did not claim that he invented this concept of threefold truth but all sutras implicitly espoused it even though they did not explicitly mention it.[76] Otherwise, the literal understanding of two truths would contradict the very essence of Buddhist notion of emptiness. Indeed, Zhiyi just named this new idea of threefold truth because he explained it only by referring to sutras or earlier Madhyamaka literature.

Tetralemma

Tetralemma (Ch., siju, 四句; Skt., catuskoti) is an important argumentative tool which Madhyamaka masters in particular employed to explain the very core Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. It consists of four alternatives, namely, affirmation, negation, both

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[76] Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-T'ai Philosophy,* 150-1

affirmation and negation and neither affirmation nor negation. I will not analyze the discussions about tetralemma in classical logic— whether tetralemma rejects the law of non-contradiction or the law of excluded middle, or the distinctness of the fourth proposition of tetralemma—because they are out of the scope of the paper.[77] I will explain the ways in which tetralemma is essential to Madhyamaka Buddhism in order to compare and contrast the use of the same concept in Twofold Mystery.

 Tetralemma is not a Buddhist doctrine, but it is an effective and efficient way of establishing emptiness. The first extensive use of tetralemma appeared in Nāgārjuna's MMK. Madhyamaka masters both in India and China, in agreement with Nāgārjuna, used tetralemma for the same philosophical and soteriological purposes.

Even though the systematic and extensive use of tetralemma became well-known with Nāgārjuna, there were some cases that the Buddha also used tetralemma primarily to prevent people from wasting their time with issues that would not help them attain enlightenment. Therefore, the role of tetralemma in the Pāli Sūtras, such as *Aggi Vacchagotta* and *Cula Malunkya* in *Majjhima Nikāya* served different functions than in Madhyamaka. The following excerpt, which is from *Majjhima Nikāya* 72, illustrates the earliest use of tetralemma:

> Gotama, where is the monk reborn whose mind is thus freed?—Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is reborn.—Then Gotama, he is not reborn.—Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is not reborn.—Then, Gotama, he is both reborn and not reborn.—Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is both reborn and not reborn.—Then, Gotama, he is neither reborn nor not reborn.—Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn (Trenckner I, 486).[78]

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[77] For the detailed discussions about tetralemma in logic, see Bagault (1983), Brain (1989), Gunaratne (1980), (1986), Ruegg (1977), Sorkin (2010).

[78] Robinson, *Early Madhyamika,* 54.

The main purpose of the Buddha's employment of tetralemma was to point out the irrelevancy and pettiness of dealing with issues that would not help one to achieve enlightenment anyway. In another example, the Buddha said that we cannot make any judgment about the rebirth of an awakened one just as we cannot talk about where an extinguished fire goes. [79] In general, the Buddha employed tetralemma to answer undecided questions, such as whether the Tathagata exists after death and whether the world is finite. Therefore, Madhyamaka use of tetralemma differed significantly from the Pāli Sūtras

Tetralemma appeared in two different forms in the Madhyamaka literature as affirmative and negative forms of the four alternatives. [80] The affirmative type of tetralemma has two main functions as Ng and Wu explained: "to respond to various sentient beings with diverse talents in particular circumstances in the teaching the Truth"[81] and "to classify the diverse understandings of the Truth or other subject matters of sentient beings"[82] The first type of tetralemma functions in a more educational and pedagogical way whereas the latter type functions as an important tool for classification. As for the negative type of tetralemma, it cancels out the four propositions of tetralemma so that one abstains from the four probable extremes to attain liberation.[83] Nāgārjuna predominantly used negative tetralemma, and it also became common among

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[79] Robinson, *Early Madhyamika,* 55.

[80] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 105.

[81] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 93.

[82] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 93.

[83] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 105.

Madhyamaka masters in China. In the rest of the section, I will explain each type of tetralemma by illustrating them.

Early Madhyamaka texts reveal the educational use of positive tetralemma. One of the distinguished characteristics of this use of tetralemma is that each alternative of tetralemma might be considered as true from the perspective of people with differing levels of understanding the Buddha's message. The following quote from Nāgārjuna in MMK 18:8 effectively illustrates this use of tetralemma:

> Everything is real and is not real,
> Both real and not real,
> Neither real nor not real.
> This is Lord Buddha's teaching.[84]

Each statement about "everything" corresponds to different people who have different levels of understanding the Buddha's messages. When Candrakirti annotated this particular verse, he explained that the Buddha employed tetralemma to teach the emptiness doctrine efficiently.[85]

> [Candrakirti] considers the tetralemma as an expedient device (upāya) that the Buddha uses in giving progressively higher instruction to the different grades of living beings. First the Buddha speaks of phenomena as if they were real, in order to lead beings to venerate his omniscience. Next, he teaches that phenomena are unreal, because they undergo modifications, and what is real does not undergo modifications. Thirdly, he teaches some hearers that phenomena are both real and unreal—real from the point of view of worldlings, but unreal from the viewpoint of the saints. To those who are practically free from passions and wrong views, he declares that phenomena are neither real nor unreal, in the same way that one denies that the son of a barren woman is white or that is black.[86]

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[84] Nāgārjuna, *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, 49.

[85] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 94.

[86] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 93- 94.

As seen in the above quote, the educational use of tetralemma functions as an expedient means (Ch., fangbian, 方便; Skt., upāya) of affirming the reality of each alternative of tetralemma. In other words, each level of tetralemma expresses the different conceptualizations of beings from a particular point of view. Therefore, we cannot really talk about the logical and practical relationships among the four propositions of tetralemma because the most important function of tetralemma is to educate people and advance their understanding of the Truth.[87] Nevertheless, the notion of expedient means has negative connotations because the first proposition refers to the lesser vehicle of Buddhism while the fourth level refers to the highest vehicle of Buddhism.

The use of negative tetralemma was certainly more common in both Indian and Chinese Madhyamaka.[88] It affirms that the four propositions should be negated. Since attaching to any of the four propositions conflicts with the essence of the emptiness doctrine, negating the four alternatives of tetralemma is an efficient way to demonstrate the emptiness of phenomena. Therefore, the employment of tetralemma appears abundantly in the Madhyamaka literature. The following quote from MMK illustrates the negative use of tetralemma.

> Empty" should not be asserted.
> "Nonempty" should not be asserted.
> Neither both nor neither should be asserted.
> They are only used nominally.[89]

The negative form of tetralemma differs from the positive form by taking the four propositions as a whole as opposed to one by one. In the practice of the negative form of

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[87] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 96.

[88] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 90-124.

[89] Nāgārjuna, *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, 61.

tetralemma, the simultaneous refutation of four alternatives leads one to attain liberation. The four alternatives of tetralemma refer to the four extremes while the negation of them is called the Middle Way.[90]

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[90] Ng and Wu, *Ti'an-Tai Buddhism*, 105.

CHAPTER III:

DAOIST TWOFOLD MYSTERY (CHONGXUAN

After analyzing the three most important concepts of Madhyamaka, I will, in this chapter, examine the fundamental characteristics of Twofold Mystery and then compare and contrast the uses and functions of emptiness, the theory of two truths, and tetralemma with the same concepts in Madhyamaka. While doing so, I will particularly focus on two main issues. First, I will contextualize Twofold Mystery by inquiring into its borrowings of Buddhist philosophical and religious concepts. Second, I will examine how Twofold Mystery employed Buddhist concepts in its worldview. As in Madhyamaka Buddhism, tetralemma and the theory of two truths serve soteriological and philosophical purposes in Twofold Mystery. Ultimately, I will argue that Twofold Mystery Daoists found themselves in an ambiguous situation because they did not only have to compete with Buddhists for imperial sponsorship by proving the originality and superiority of Daoism but they also had to draw on the sophisticated philosophical and religious concepts and methods of their rival, Buddhism.

Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (fl.632-650) was considered as the de facto founder of Twofold Mystery because he produced a large amount of work which delineated the fundamental characteristics of Twofold Mystery. Even though Cheng Xuanying claimed the first development of Twofold Mystery was started by Sun Deng 孫登 in the 4th century, we cannot not trace any text which gives a clear picture of Twofold Mystery until Cheng Xuanying. According to a brief account of the *New History of Tang* (新唐书 *Xin Tangshu*), Cheng Xuanying was born in Shanzhou 陕州 (Honan) and lived in

seclusion in Donghai 東海. After he was summoned to the capital by the Tang Emperor Taizong in 631, he took an active role in the imperially sponsored Buddho-Daoist debates in 636. He became an abbot of the very prestigious Xihua Guan temple 西华觀 in 643 and also took a role in translating the *Daode jing* to Sanskrit with the Buddhist master Xuanzang[91] 玄奘 (602-664). However, the two disagreed over an appropriate word while translating the Dao to Sanskrit. Finally he was exiled to Yuzhou 郁州 during the Yonghui era (650-656).[92] He left a quite large amount of work illustrating Twofold Mystery. He had a sub-commentary to the Zhuangzi commentary of Guo Xiang[93] 郭象 (252?-312), a commentary to the *Daode jing* in two chapters along with his introduction, another commentary to the *Scripture of Salvation* (度人經 *Duren jing*) (DZ 1)[94] and a lost commentary to the *Yi jing* 易經.[95]

Twofold Mystery masters claimed that the term "twofold mystery" originated in the first chapter of the *Daode jing*, "mystery upon mystery" (xuan zhi you xuan, 玄之又玄)[96]. The interpretation of this phrase essentially marked the fundamental characteristics

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[91] Xuanzang was a very famous Buddhist pilgrim to India who brought hundreds of texts and many relics back to China. Under the Tang reign, he translated a large amount of Sanskrit texts into Chinese.

[92] Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 54-55.

[93] Guo Xiang's commentary to Zhuangzi is in the *Nanhua zhenjing zhushu* 南華眞經註疏 (DZ 745). For more information about the commentary, see Franciscus Verellen and Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, vol. 1. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 294-296.

[94] DZ refers to the Daoist Canon of Zhengtong Reign Period compiled in the Ming Dynasty.

[95] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 39.

[96] The excerpt might be translated in two different ways: "render it mysterious and again mysterious" or "mystery upon mystery." Since both ways of translating this phrase will be in line with what Twofold Mystery Daoists proposed, I will be stick with one of them to avoid any confusion throughout the paper.

of Twofold Mystery. The leading figures of Twofold Mystery such as Cheng Xuanying and Li Rong commented on this phrase in their explanation of Twofold Mystery.

The following quote from the first chapter of the *Daode jing* explains "mysterious" and then proposes "mystery upon mystery:"

> Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets;
> But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations
> These two are the same
> But they diverge in name as they issue forth
> Being the same they are called mysterious,
> Mystery upon mystery—
> The gateway of the manifold secrets.[97]

According to the above excerpt from the first chapter of the *Daode jing,* "mysterious" is the the same state of being as both having and lacking desire because they only differ in name but not in origin. It is, in fact, paradoxical to be both opposing things at the same time. Yet, we can explain the unity of two polar ideas and beings from the perspective of the Buddhist understanding of the ultimate truth. This perspective asserts that people only perceive them as distinctive realities because of their lack of understanding and spiritual capabilities. Furthermore, after one realizes this level of *"mysterious,"* he or she should go beyond it, as implied in the *Daode jing* "mystery upon mystery." Eventually, one will realize the manifold secrets of the Dao. Therefore, "mystery upon mystery" is the final stage at which one has to arrive to achieve oneness with the Dao. From this phrase of "mystery upon mystery", Twofold Mystery Daoists claimed that Laozi first used tetralemma, which Buddhists otherwise regarded as having been brought into China with Mahyamaka Buddhism.[98]

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[97] Laozi, *Daode jing*, trans. D. C. Lau. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989) p.3.

[98] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 3.

Twofold Mystery was first described as a distinctive guiding principle (zong 宗) in *Annotation on the Preface of the Daodejing* (道德经开提序决义疏 *Daodejing kaiti xujue yishu*) written by Cheng Xuanying. After he enumerated different interpretations of the *Daode jing*, he concluded that "Sun Deng 孫登 of the Jin relied on Twofold Mystery as support for the guiding principle. Although all these commentators are different, today, I consider Mister Sun as correct."[99] This excerpt not only shows that Twofold Mystery was taken as a distinctive understanding of the *Daode jing* but it also demonstrated Twofold Mystery was the orthodox understanding of the *Daode jing*. The following excerpt from Cheng Xuanying gives more detailed picture of various interpretations of the *Daode jing*.

> When one explains and annotates the classic scriptures, one ought to know the beliefs they contain. Moreover, annotations highlight certain points more than others and so vary according to the time they belong to. Yan Junping's *Zhigui* 旨归 centered on the Mysterious Vacuity as belief, Gu Huijun's *Tanggao* 堂诰 on Non-action, Meng Zhizhou and Zang Xuanjing on Virture, Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty on "Neither existence Nor Non-existence," and Sun Deng of the Jin Dynasty on the Twofold Mystery. Today, in spite of such different focuses, we consider Sun Deng's work as orthodox, the Twofold Mystery as its subject, and Non-action as its basis. What we call *xuan* means "remote and profound," and also "without obstacle." Speech is remote ad profound without obstacle or attachment. It is not attached to existence, or non-existence. It is not attached to attachment, or non-attachment. There is no attachment in the "four negations", that is what we call the Twofold Mystery. So it is said in the *Tao Te Ching*: "Mystery upon mystery—the gateway to manifold secrets."[100]

Describing distinct ways of reading the *Daode jing* deriving from their beliefs, Cheng Xuanying, the prominent advocate of Twofold Mystery in the early Tang, delineates the focal points of Twofold Mystery. Not only does the excerpt point out that Twofold

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[99] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 29.

[100] Yijie Tang. "Cheng Xuanying and the Study of the Twofold Mystery," in *Taoism*, ed. Zhongjian Mou, trans. Pan Junliang et al. (Boston: Brill, 2012), 149.

Mystery is the conventional way of understanding the *Daode jing* among other commentaries but it also indicates the tension and competition among these different commentaries. Cheng Xuanying also undermines other approaches in his description of Twofold Mystery because Twofold Mystery surpasses both Yan Junping's *Mysterious Vacuity* and Emperor Wu's *Neither existence Nor Non-existence.* In addition, he explained Twofold Mystery in his interpretations of xuan zhi you xuan 玄之又玄 in the first chapter of the *Daode jing.* He interpreted the first xuan as "remote and profound" and "non-attachment" and the second xuan as going beyond "non-attachment" itself.

Similarly, Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933) categorized different commentaries of the *Daode jing* into five groups based on their interpretations of the *Daode jing.* Twofold Mystery was again one of these. Du Guangting also mentioned the name of the people who represented Twofold Mystery in the different periods. For example, Meng Zhizhou 孟智周(4th and 5th century) and Zang Xuanying 臧靜靜 (fl. 557-589) were in the Liang Dynasty 梁朝 (502-557) while Zhu Rou 諸糅 and Liu Jinxi 劉進喜 were in the Chen 陳 朝 (557-589) and the Sui Dynasties 隋朝 (589-613), respectively.[101] However, the major representatives of Twofold Mystery, such as Cheng Xuanying and Li Rong 李榮 (fl. 685-683), came from the Tang Dynasty[102] Du Guangting's description of Twofold Mystery as a separate way of reading the *Daode jing* and the association of it with people in different periods have led some scholars to define it as a full-fledged Daoist school.[103] After Du

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[101] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy,* 190, Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 52.

[102] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy,* 190.

[103] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 344. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 52-57.

Guangting's classification of commentaries of the *Daode jing* in the early tenth century, Twofold Mystery has not been studied as a distinct teaching in the twentieth century.[104]

However, the description of Twofold Mystery as a proper school in the sense of a sect leads to misunderstandings of the development of Daoism and the interactions between Daoism and Buddhism. Even though Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850-933) lineage of Twofold Mystery started with Meng Zhizhou 孟智周 in the Liang Dynasty (502-557) and ended in the early Tang Dynasty (618-720), Twofold Mystery was not regarded as a distinct school in Daoism by the leading thinkers and commentators of the time.[105] Rather, it is more appropriate to define Twofold Mystery as a fashion of the time because both Buddhists and Daoists employed tetralemma logical reasoning and the theory of two truths in the explanation of their teachings.[106] Sharf also states that Twofold Mystery was not identified and characterized as a specific way of reading the *Daode jing* until the later Tang Dynasty by Du Guangting.[107] Sharf also argues that the people who were associated with Twofold Mystery did not consider themselves as a part of a distinct school.[108] Accordingly, this paper deals with Twofold Mystery as a Daoist philosophical trend of the time that brought about new interpretations of the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi* which were highly influenced by the Madhyamaka philosophical school.

Scholars of Chinese Religions have attempted to categorize Twofold Mystery in different ways that have demonstrated differing approaches to understanding Chinese

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[104] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 3-4.

[105] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy,* 190.

[106] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy,* 190.

[107] Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 52.

[108] Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 59.

religions. One the one hand, Fujiwara and Sunayama have defined it as a full-fledged Daoist school. [109] On the other hand, Kohn and Robinet have described it as "a philosophical tendency". [110] A more radical description was made by Sharf who argued that Twofold Mystery was not "a self-conscious school, sect, or tradition of commentarial writing, much less a religious institution"[111] Fujiwara and Sunayama clearly approached Twofold Mystery from a sectarian point of view which is opposed to the very nature of Chinese religions because they were fluid and permeable rather than divided into strict categories. In other words, the borders of religions in China are not so strict that each religion cannot easily borrow from others, nor is this regarded as an impure act that contaminates the target religion. For example, even though Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713-756) favored Daoism, he wrote a commentary on the Buddhist *Vajracchedikā* (*the Diamond Sutra*) and the *Confucian Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing*, 孝經) in addition to the *Daode jing*.[112] Xuanzong received lay ordination by a prominent Daoist monk in 721. Therefore, Xuanzong's close engagement with Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism defies the Judeo-Christian construction of 'religion' and the Japanese understanding of sectarianism which presuppose the existence of clear-cut boundaries among religions. As a result, the Judeo-Christian understanding of religion and the Japanese sectarian approach do not explain but obscure Twofold Mystery, in particular, and Chinese religions, in general.

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[109] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 344.

[110] Kohn and Kirkland, *"Daoism in the Tang,"* 344. Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy*, 190.

[111] Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism,* 53.

[112] Robinet, *Taoism,* 187.

Twofold Mystery mainly revolves around the commentaries of the *Daode jing*. The major representatives of Twofold Mystery, like Cheng Xuanying and Li Rong wrote commentaries on the *Daode jing*. The nature and structure of the *Daode jing* as a concise, rhymed, terse, and polysemous text has attracted many people to commentate on it for centuries. Han Feizi's 韩非子 (280-233 BCE) commentary is the first sample available dated 230 BCE and more than seven hundred commentaries have been made on the *Daode jing* thereafter.[113] Robinet also has pointed out that different tendencies and beliefs have caused the *Daode jing* to be read and understood distinctively.[114] In other words, the different commentaries of the *Daode jing* marked the different schools of China. Robinet drew attention to the three types of commentary on the *Daode jing*, namely, there are "technical and specialist readings," "philosophical readings" and "inner alchemy interpretations."[115] Twofold Mystery is one type of philosophical reading of the *Daode jing*. It should also be known that Twofold Mystery is not the only philosophical interpretation of the *Daode jing*. Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249), founder of Mysterious Learning (玄学 xuanxue), first made a philosophical interpretation of the *Daode jing* which differed from Twofold Mystery. Wang Bi stated that non-being is ontologically existent as the foundation and origin of all beings.[116] The fundamental difference between Twofold Mystery and Mysterious Learning was that the former claimed to go beyond any conceptualizations of "being" and "non-being" while the latter established that "non-

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[113] Isabelle Robinet. "Later Commentaries: Textual Polysemy and Syncretistic Interpretations," in *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching,* ed. Livia Kohn et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 119-120.

[114] Robinet, Textual Polysemy, 119-120.

[115] Robinet, Textual Polysemy, 119.

[116] Tang, *Twofold Mystery*, 167-68.

being" was the origin of "being."[117] Therefore, in Mysterious Learning, non-being (无 wu) constitutes the existence of heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things.[118]

After this general introduction to Twofold Mystery, the following three sections will examine the Daoist employments of the Buddhist concepts of emptiness, the theory of two truths and tetralemma.

Emptiness

The Buddhist notion of emptiness which was developed by Madhyamaka was unprecedented to the Chinese philosophical and religious milieu. Neither Confucianism nor Daoism had a similar kind of ontological and phenomenological view of non-existence. The main difference between the Madhyamaka Buddhist conceptualization of emptiness and the Twofold Mystery Daoist one is that Buddhism rejects the inherent existence (svabhava) of beings while Daoism accepts the indefinable Dao as the origin of myriad things. In addition, as is explained in detail in the previous chapter, the Madhyamaka conceptualization of emptiness heavily draws on dependent co-origination in the elucidation of emptiness. However, the emptiness of the Dao depends much more on its profundity and mystery rather than its vacuity and voidness. The following excerpt, from Cheng Xuanying's commentary on the emptiness of the Dao in *Daode jing* 32, will illustrate how how conceptualization of emptiness differs in Twofold Mystery Daoism from Madhyamaka Buddhism. Cheng says that "the Dao […] is eternally without name" and further explains that "this principle of empty pervasion is eternally deep and still, it is

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[117] Yu, *Reading the Chuang-tzu*, 72-73.

[118] Alan K. L. Chan "A Tale of Two Commentaries: Ho-shang-kung and Wang Pi on the Lao-tzu" in *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching,* ed. Livia Kohn et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 100.

neither form nor sound, neither personal name nor style; solitary, it alone surpasses the logic tetralemma, vague, and indistinct it goes beyond the hundred negations" (Yan, 1983, 427).[119] Even though the same language of tetralemma and hundred negations are used to explain the Dao in Twofold Mystery, the Dao cannot be asserted as empty in the sense of Buddhist Madhyamka. Rather, using Buddhist terminology gives another chance for Twofold Mystery Daoists to explain the mystery of the Dao from a different perspective.

In his introduction to the commentary of the *Daode jing*, Cheng Xuanying explained the "mysterious" with "non-attachment" but, he does not explain how he came to this interpretation of "mysterious". His explication of "mysterious" and the terminology he used to explain twofold mystery demonstrate how he employed Buddhist Madhyamaka concepts in his orthodox understanding of Daoism.

> "Mystery" is a name for what is profound and far; it also implies the meaning of nonattachment. It denotes the ultimate profoundness and the ultimate distance, no attachments and no clinging; when there is no attachment to being and no attachment nonbeing.
> [Then, one is] not only not attached to attachment but also not attached to "nonattachment." Thus, the hundred negations and the tetralemma [leave the adept with] no attachments whatsoever. This is called "twofold mystery." (Yan 1983, 260; Robinet 1977, 256).[120]

The first "mystery" denotes non-attachment to both being and non-being, yet this level of understanding does not help in attaining the Dao of Middle Oneness. As Madhyamaka teaches, one should not attach to being nor non-being to realize enlightenment because both ways lead adepts in the wrong direction to the same degree. Therefore, one should go beyond and get rid of any attachments to being, non-being, both being and non-being, and finally neither being nor non-being in order to attain

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[119]Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 96.

[120] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 95-96.

enlightenment. Similarly, Cheng Xuanying suggests getting rid of all attachment to any possible conceptualizations of beings which are successfully made by tetralemma when he talks about the second "mystery." By using tetralemma and the hundred negations, which have been used by Buddhists for at least four hundred years, one will reach the Daoist Twofold Mystery. Tetralemma is an efficient and effective way of establishing emptiness in Madhyamaka, yet tetralemma in Twofold Mystery serves as the explanation of the profundity of the Dao.

Compared to the other Buddhist concepts of tetralemma and two truths, emptiness stays more closely related to the doctrinal, as opposed to the methodological, aspect of Buddhism. Emptiness is certainly used is both religions but definitely for different purposes. However, the main problem arises when the same methods are used by both religions and they produce different results. As the following two sections will explain, the use of two truths and tetralemma by both religions has many similarities. I argue that the socio-political context of the early Tang Dynasty might give a possible explanation of this paradoxical situation because the vying for imperial patronage not only required Daoists to become intellectually and philosophically competitive with Buddhists, but also it obliged them to demonstrate their superiority over Buddhism.

Even though Mystery Learning (xuanxue, 玄学) described the original non-being (benwu, 本无), which is "an underlined state or force of the universe, not only latent in its non-apparent phases but also permanently there as the base of all things,"[121] the Buddhist concept of emptiness differed distinctively from Mystery Learning's original

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[121] Livia Kohn, "Xuanxue," in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1141-1142.

non-being because original non-being is the source of all beings. However, Buddhism does not accept any original being from which other beings come. Rather, it asserts the emptiness of emptiness because emptiness itself might be a kind of an attachment.

Tang found an inseparable link between Mysterious Learning and Twofold Mystery because Twofold Mystery developed from Mysterious Learning.[122] Tang also said that "[o]bviously, Sun Deng[123] is influenced by Wang Bi's, 'Unity of the Noumenon and the Application [tiyongruyi] 体用如一.' The Twofold Mystery is influenced by the 'High Evaluation of Non-Existence 贵无 [guiwu]' ".[124]

The Theory of Two Truths

One of the important functions of the theory of two truths in Madhymaka is that the worldly truth is an important instrument leading followers to the ultimate truth, which is also a necessary step to attain enlightenment. As explained in detail in the previous chapter, the ontological duality of two truths can in no way be be asserted in Madhyamaka Buddhism. Likewise, Twofold Mystery Daoism first employs the existences of being to eliminate any attachments to non-being. Later, it draws on non-being to discard any attachments to being. Ultimately, one should get rid of two extremes views of being and non-being to realize "the Dao of Middle Oneness". The following quote from Cheng Xuanying explains how it happens:

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[122] Tang, *Cheng Xuanying*, 150-161.

[123] Sun Deng is regarded as the first Twofold Mystery master by Cheng Xuanying in his introduction to the commentary of the *Daode jing*.

[124] Tang, *Cheng Xuanying*, 150.

> One must not develop any desire towards the dharmas of being. One must never even desire the simplicity which has no name. First use non-being to discard being, then use being to discard non-being. Separated from both, being and non-being, this is the Tao of Middle Oneness….
> To abandon even the mysterious and again mysterious is called probing the dark, giving oneself up to withdrawal. This is following principle to the end and fulfilling one's nature (chap. 37; Yan 1983: 446; Fujiwara 1980: 658). [125]

One of the most important functions of the worldly truth in Madhyamaka Buddhism is that it leads people to the ultimate truth. In order to get to the ultimate truth, one should draw on the worldly truth such as meditation, chanting, celibacy and so on. Similarly, Cheng Xuanying emphasizes the necessity of employing the existences of beings to establish the non-existences of them or the other way around. This first attempt is equated with the worldly truth because neither the existences of beings nor the non-existences of beings are the Dao of Middle Oneness but an instrument leading one to the unity of the Dao.

In addition, Twofold Mystery Daoists draws on the theory of two truths to demonstrate that people who have the different levels of understanding the Dao should follow different paths that correspond to their level of understanding. The following excerpt from Cheng Xuanying's commentary on *Zhuangzi* illustrates the application of two truths to tetralemma.

> There are four levels of meaning:
> First, the wonderful origin is empty and concentrated, one is serene and without movement.
> Second, the traces develop through impulse and response, one is active and response, one is active and not serene.
> Third, origin and traces coincide, one is active and serene at the same time.
> Fourth, origin and traces are both forgotten, one has discarded both movement and serenity (DZ 745, 9.13b; Sunayama 1980a: 133)[126]

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[125] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy,* 192-193.

[126] Kohn, *Taoist Mystical Philosophy*, 193

Using two polar term terms "serene" and "active," the above excerpt employed two truths in tetralemma, which was also heavily appeared in Chinese Madhyamaka. The excerpt starts with saying that "[t]here are four levels of meaning" which is also quite similar to the pedagogical use of two truths because it presupposes that people have different capacities to understand the truth.

As a result, the different uses of two truths appeared in Twofold Mystery similar to Madhyamaka Buddhism. The soteriological aspect of two truths is also quite important in Twofold Mystery because it is an efficient and effective way of realizing the mystery of the Dao.

Tetralemma

Tetralemma consists of four propositions in which each proposition refutes the one which comes before. The following four lines are the application of tetralemma to the existence of beings.

> All dharmas are being (有 you)
> All dharmas are nonbeing (无 wu)
> All dharmas are being and nonbeing (亦 有亦无 yi you yi wu)
> All dharmas are neither being nor nonbeing (非有非无 fei you fei wu)[127]

The above example is the application of positive tetralemma, in which each line is approved, but its negative application, in which each line is negated, is mostly common in both Buddhist and Daoist texts. Apart from its philosophical functions, it is closely linked to soteriological aspects of both Buddhism and Daoism. It moves step by step to

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[127] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 1.

lead practitioners to attain the ultimate reality, which is either the realization of Dao (dedao 得道)[128] or emptiness of emptiness.

Buddhist use of tetralemma, as explained in detail in the previous chapter, performed different functions based on whether negative or affirmative tetralemma was used. The function of tetralemma even changed based on who used it. For example, Piṅgala (Qingmu 青目) (4th century) and Candrakirti (Yuecheng 月稱) (6th and 7th century) emphasized the pedagogical and educational role of tetralemma in leading practitioners to attain enlightenment while Bhāvaviveka (Qingbian 清辯) (c.490–570) mainly used tetralemma to classify various expressions of truths based on people's different capacities. However, the most common use of tetralemma was the negative one, which proposed to go beyond all possible conceptualizations of beings by refuting the four propositions of tetralemma.

Likewise, Cheng Xuanying primarily employed negative tetralemma. He talked about surpassing tetralemma (chaosiju 超四句) and leaving the hundred negations behind (libaifei 离白非) when he explained Twofold Mystery in his commentary on the first verse of the *Daode jing*.[129] The extensive use of tetralemma by Twofold Mystery Daoists started after they encountered the use of it by the Buddhists. However, the Daoists who used tetralemma claimed that Laozi already employed the method of tetralemma in the *Daode jing*.[130] As we have seen they asserted that the term "twofold mystery" came from

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[128] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 2.

[129] Yu, *Reading the Chuang-tzu*, 85.

[130] Assandri, "The *Yijing* and Chongxuan Xue", 399.

the first chapter of the *Daode jing* (玄之又玄, 众妙之门 Xuan zhi you xuan, zhong miao zhi men).[131]

Tetralemma was prevalent in the mediaeval Buddhist writings in China to explain the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. The efficient use of it by Buddhists, as well as its sophisticated structure, made Daoists employ it to explain the deep and profound nature of the Dao. The religiously and philosophically competitive time period of imperial patronage, which would culminate in lavish support, particularly motivated Twofold Mystery Daoists to borrow Buddhist concepts. The following excerpt from Cheng Xuanying's commentary on the *Zhuangzi* illustrates the application of tetralemma in the description of twofold mystery:

> Can 参 means threefold; liao 廖 means to sever. The first is to sever "there is"; the second, to sever "there is not"; the third, both "there is" and "there is not"; thus it is called Three Severings (sanjue 三絶). For the realm of "Dark Obscurity," though subtle, is not the extreme; only when one has reached the Three Severings does he arrive at the "double mystery"[132]

Cheng Xuanying draws on tetralemma to demonstrate the profundity of the Dao. Each proposition should be severed to reach the double mystery through which one will attain the Dao of Middle Oneness. The Buddhist notion of emptiness rejects any permanent concept and even itself by using tetralemma. Yet the Dao, which is empty, is the source of all beings in Daoism. It seems unlikely that Daoists wanted to establish the same kind of Buddhist emptiness by using tetralemma. Rather, they primarily wanted to express their teaching in a sophisticated and philosophical way in order to compete with Buddhism. Nevertheless, this is not only the implication of using tetralemma in the

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[131] Assandri, The Yijing and Chongxuan Xue, 399.

[132] Yu, *Reading the Chuang-tzu*, 85.

interpretations of the Daoist classics, because the soteriological aspect of tetralemma in Twofold Mystery writings cannot be underestimated.

Kumārajīva might have been one of the earliest commentators who used tetralemma in the explanation of the phrase "diminish and again diminish" (損之又損, sun zhi you sun) in Chapter 48 of the *Daode jing*. Kumārajīva's commentary of the whole text is not extant today, but the following excerpt clearly demonstrates that the employment of tetralemma in the *Daode jing* did not originate with Twofold Mystery:

> "Diminishing them" means that there is no coarse thing that is not cast away so that this casting away gets to the point of forgetting about evil. Thereupon there is no fine thing that is not eliminated so that this eliminating gets to the point of forgetting about good. Evil is what is to be rejected, good is what is to be approved.
>   Having diminished what is to be rejected, he will also diminish what is to be approved. That is why [the text] says: "diminishing this [the one], and the again diminishing that [the other]." Once [things to be] approved and [things to be] disapproved are both forgotten, feelings and desires are cut off. Then, one's [own] capacity harmonizes with Dao to the point of reaching noninterference. Although oneself is "without interference," one brings to fruition the other entities' own activities, that is why there "is nothing that is not done." (Wagner 1999. 113-114; Daode zhenjing qushan ji, DZ 718, 84)[133]

As seen in the above excerpt, Kumārajīva employed tetralemma logical reasoning in explaining twofold diminishing. In Kumārajīva's commentary, twofold diminishing not only serves philosophical purposes but soteriological ones. After discarding the dualistic conceptualizations of both forgetting evil and good, one should even eliminate forgetting itself. By using tetralemma, one will certainly reach the point of discarding his/her desires, which amounts to attaining oneness with the Dao.

As in Madhyamaka Buddhism, tetralemma importantly serves soteriological purposes. An adept follows each proposition step by step until they realize oneness with

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[133] Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 89.

the Dao, which enables them to have everlasting life. The following excerpt from Cheng

Xuanying illustrated the soteriological use of tetralemma in a Twofold Mystery text:

> Section two explains that the sage unites with the empty and holds the tally of
> Twofold Mystery. Tally is [a sign of] belief; it has to be united [with the missing
> half] Left is Yang, it means life.
> This means that for the sage who embodies the Dao, the objects of knowing and
> his wisdom mysteriously fit, the potential [of knowing] and what he knows are
> both united; thus he surpasses these four propositions and goes beyond those
> hundred negations; this is how he attains everlasting life. (ch. 79; Yan 1983,
> 640)[134]

The above excerpt successfully illustrates the soteriological function of tetralemma in

Cheng Xuanying's Twofold Mystery. By employing tetralemma, an adept will reach

everlasting life, which is the primary goal of Daoism. Tetralemma enables one to discard

each possible proposition that necessarily hinders people from attaining oneness with the

Dao because it causes people to be attached to one-sided views.

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[134]Assandri, *Twofold Mystery*, 96-97.

CONCLUSION

Twofold Mystery certainly represented a particular type of interaction between Buddhism and Daoism in the early Tang Dynasty (618-720). This Daoist philosophical movement tended to interpret the Daoist Classics by using Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophical concepts such as emptiness, tetralemma, and the theory of two truths. Twofold Mystery Daoists adopted Buddhist concepts to systematize and codify their teachings but at the same time maintained their differences from Buddhism. In this thesis, I have argued that the assertion of authenticity and originality of Daoism is as misleading to the understanding of the development of Daoism as the Buddhist-centric approach of Daoism which undermines the role of Daoism in its interactions with Buddhism.

The doctrine of emptiness in the Buddhist sense has never existed in Daoism because Madhyamaka denies the existence of self-nature and the unchangeability of things while Twofold Mystery accepts the Dao as the source of all things. Since tetralemma and the theory of two truths primarily served for the establishment of emptiness in Buddhism, Twofold Mystery Daoists drew on tetralemma to demonstrate the profundity of the Dao as well as to lead practitioners to attain oneness with the Dao. In other words, Twofold Mystery employed emptiness to explain the ineffability of the Dao whereas Buddhists viewed emptiness as dependent co-origination and verbal designation.

Contextualizing Twofold Mystery reveals that socio-political conditions lay at the heart of the Daoist borrowing of Buddhist concepts. Vying with Buddhism for imperial patronage obliged Daoists to present their teachings as competitive with Buddhist ones.

However, Buddhism had a long history of religious and philosophical factional debates in India that Daoism could not compete with. Therefore, Daoism necessarily employed Buddhist concepts to systematize and codify their teaching under the Buddhist umbrella. Daoists adopted Buddhist concepts because they were effective and efficient ways of presenting their teachings.

I have argued that a disregard of the impact of Buddhism on the formation of Daoism by claiming that Daoists discovered their own potentiality after interacting with Buddhists obscures the development of Daoism. As explained in the last chapter, the assertion of the first use of tetralemma by Laozi in the *Daode jing* best illustrates the attempts of creating an authentic Daoism. However, later Daoists claimed that Laozi's first employment of tetralemma demonstrates the originality of Daoism by disassociating it from Buddhism. In addition, the excerpts from Twofold Mystery texts, as detailed in the last chapter, demonstrate that Twofold Mystery Daoists employed Buddhist concepts for similar philosophical and soteriological purposes.

Likewise, denying the ability of Daoists to respond actively to the fast development of Buddhism in China also obscures the relationship between Buddhism and Daoism. At the time of competition for imperial patronage, Daoists had to present their differences as superior to Buddhism to be praised and prized by the emperor. Therefore, even though they drew largely on Buddhist Madhyamaka concepts, they employed them in the Daoist worldview. The Twofold Mystery Daoists seem to have felt that they illustrated their unique teachings with the tetralemma and the theory of two truths, which were used by Madhyamaka to establish the fundamental doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, emptiness.

GLOSSARY

Amituo jing 阿彌陀經
Āryadeva 提婆
Bai lun 百論
Bailun shu 百論疏
Benwu, 本无
Bore boluomi duo jing 般若波羅蜜多經
Bore xinjing 般若心經
Buzhenkong, 不眞空
Chaosiju 超四句
Chen Xilie 陳希烈
Cheng Xuanying 成玄英
Chongxuan 重玄
Chongxuanxue, 崇玄學
Da zhidu lun, 大智度論
Dao'an 道安
Daode jing 道德经
Daodejing kaiti xujue yishu 道德经开提序决义疏
Daoxuan 道宣
Dasheng xuanlun 大乘玄論
Dedao 得道
Du Guangting 杜光庭
Duren jing 度人經
Erdi yi 二諦義
Erdi zhang 二諦章
Erdi 二谛
Fahua jing 法華經
Fangbian 方便
Gaozong 高宗
Gaozu 高祖
Ge Chafu 葛巢甫
Ge Xuan 葛玄
Geyi 格義
Guangzan bore boluomi jing 光讚般若波羅蜜經
Han Feizi 韩非子
Huangdi 黄帝

Ji gujing Fo Dao Lunheng 集古今佛道論衡
Jielu zong, 戒律宗
Jingang jing 金剛經
Jinggang jing 金剛經
Jixianyuan, 集賢院
Jizang 吉藏
Kong 空
Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什
Laozi 老子
Li Er 李耳
Li Rong 李榮
Li Yuan 李淵
Libaifei 离白非
Lingbao 靈寶
Longshu pusa, 龍樹菩薩
Meng Zhizhou 孟智周
Pan Shizheng 潘師正
Pingala 青目
Qingbian 清辯
Qingmu 青目
Sanluan zong 三論宗
Sengrui, 僧睿
Sengzhao 僧肇
Shangqing 上清
Shengyi di 勝義諦
Shengzu 聖祖
Shi er men lun shu 十二門論疏
Shiji 史记
Shisu di 世俗諦
Siju 四句
Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎
Sun Deng 孫登
Taishan 台山
Taizong 太宗
Tang Dynasty 唐朝
Tianshidao 天师道
Tiantai School 天台宗

Tiyongruyi 体用如一
Wang Bi 王弼
Weimi jing 維摩經
Wu Zetian 武则天
Wu 无
Xiao jing 孝經
Xuan, 玄
Xuanxue 玄学
Xuanzong 玄宗
Yang Xi 楊羲
Ye Fashan 葉法善
Yi jing 易經
Yu sheng ren 於聖人
Yu shi jian 於世間
Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊
Yuecheng 月稱
Zhang Daoling 張道陵
Zhigui 旨归
Zhongguan lun shu 中觀論疏
Zhonglun 中論
Zhuangzi 莊子
Zixing, 自行
Zong 宗
Zuowang 坐忘

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